

EGREMONT GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Feb. 10, 2021

The meeting opened at 4:03.

Members present: Juliette Haas, Emily Eyre (co-chair), Pat Konecky (co-chair), Marj Wexler, Corinna Barnard, Robin Goldberg

Also present: Sharon Waskow

Minutes of the Jan. 6, 2021, meeting were unanimously accepted.

Sustainability Coordinator Report

Juliette said calendar-year data for MSW —municipal solid waste, a.k.a. the non-recyclables or trash — showed the Town was up by 100 tons, which is understandable given the Covid-related population boom. The Town has appropriated extra funding for disposal. Juliette said the good news is that China's closure of its borders to U.S. recyclables has spurred a revival in U.S. recycling markets and the Town is benefiting from a higher AMV, or average market value for materials. After some general discussion of the changes underway in recycling, Emily recommended a recent article circulated via the list-serve for the Egremont October Plastic Reduction Challenge, or EOPRC.

In follow-through from the last meeting, Juliette said she had reached out to her contact in Sheffield who was working on a pickup system for compostable kitchen scraps about the possibility of including local restaurants. She has not yet heard back.

Rain Barrel Project Update

Emily said organizers had been very busy with publicity during the past month. This included an article by Marj in The Berkshire Edge, printing and hanging posters around Town, emailing the Egremont Garden Club and the Town's Agriculture and Conservation Commissions, a notice on the Plastic-Free Facebook page and the EOPRC list. Greenagers is also going to add rain-barrel purchase to their "front-lawn food" project. So far, between 22 and 24 barrels had been purchased and the goal is to reach 32 (since the barrels are shipped in increments of eight). Delivery is in mid-May. If sales are not sufficient by March 1, organizers plan to reach out to nearby towns. So far, outreach to other towns includes a notice on Alford Assist, Alford's community email, and notification of two active people in Sheffield. Marj said there may be a rolling waiting list.

Pill Bottle Collection Update

Emily said that since beginning it on Dec. 7, she had collected 200 bottles and the container is almost full. When it is so, she will send it to Mathew 25 Ministries, a missionary organization with strong ecological component that repurposes the containers for medical supply in countries that need them. She said it's an ongoing project that she considers possible for her to personally sustain. Mary Brazie has volunteered to have the Town pay shipping costs. After Covid, Emily is planning to reach out to the Egremont Council on Aging.

Berkshire Edge Articles

Corinna said the next one will be by Emily about the pill bottle collection. Otherwise here is the pipeline:

- 1) Virtual tool library – about a community effort and sharing in general.
- 2) MRF town materials and the shifts underway locally in the recycling industry.
- 3) BRTA bus routes & South County public transportation.
- 4) Rollout for rebates for EVs are back from state.
- 5) Findings of the National Grid's Green Communities program, begun in 2012. Data from these various certified communities shows the strides possible in reducing electricity consumption (renewables, conservation & efficiency). Biggest challenge is transportation (which could provide a tie-in with No. 3 & No. 4).
- 6) Plastic avoidance in the era of Covid.
- 7) Annual article about the Town's most recent "Waste Line" figures

The group gave Pat and Sharon the go ahead to work on an article or two about the financial sector's role in climate change and what individuals can do. One article would be about green investing and the other would be about finding banks and credit unions that support community initiatives that provide alternative to fossil fuels. Sharon said their idea is to inform people about the role of financial service companies in fueling "all of this disaster we are confronting." What you as an individual can do, Sharon said, is "first be aware."

Berkshire Peaker Plants

Pat said it's an important movement that she is said is "taking off" and she provided a briefing. These plants exist to provide power during the few hours a year when the grid cannot keep up, during extreme periods of extreme cold and heat weather. Since they are highly inefficient and polluting, "shave the peak" local publicity efforts are underway to help individuals learn how to personally avoid using energy at peak times. Peaker plants are expensive, powered by filthy fuels and often located

close to residential areas where they pose a public-health threat. Paid by all our electric bills, they cost \$8 million a year and drive up the wholesale cost of electricity in general. They are responsible for about 15 percent of local non-automotive greenhouse gas emissions. Two are in Pittsfield; one in Lee. The one on Merrill Road in Pittsfield runs on gas and oil. Some run on kerosene. Some predate the Clean Energy Act and don't comply with those regulations. They could be replaced with battery and solar. One in Pittsfield that is up for re-licensing is owned by a Japanese company and the woman who runs its U.S. division is a graduate of Smith College who will be speaking at her alma mater the following week. Local members of the Sunrise Movement are mobilizing to apply pressure on her to shut it down.

In light of the political activity around the peaker plants, Sharon asked about the committee's role in supporting legislative initiatives. The committee has an established function in educating citizens, but legislative activity can entail the permission of the Select Board. Juliette advised that individual members address the peaker plants specifically. Select Board member about the peaker plants. Pat said that the Select Board should be approached on an issue-by-issue basis. After a few such efforts, Marj said the committee could seek blanket permission to engage in legislative and political activities related to its mission.

April Roadside Clean-Up

Marj said that it would be a replication of the approach taken last year, also during the pandemic, when she asked people to take a stretch of road and handle the sorting and disposal on their own. She will invite volunteers to send photos of their trash "finds" and perhaps offer awards for the most exotic bits of trash.

The next meeting will be on March 10, Wednesday at 4pm.

The meeting ended at 5:15.

Respectfully submitted,
Corinna Barnard